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Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System

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Report of the Secretary-General**

I. Introduction

1. The present report was prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 54/8 of 25 October 1999 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System (SELA).

2. For the preparation of the present report, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) wrote to the following organizations of the United Nations system requesting an update of their activities with SELA: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Trade Organization (WTO), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Universal Postal Union (UPU), World Bank, World Health Organization (WHO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

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** The late submission (by one week) of the draft of this report was due to the delayed receipt of contributions from some of the cooperating organizations.

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(INSTRAW), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), United Nations University (UNU), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). Four of these organizations sent updated information on their cooperation with SELA. Ten others noted that they were not, at the time, conducting joint activities with SELA, although some of them expressed a desire to do so in the future. The following summary is based on the information submitted.

II. Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System

3. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session (A/53/420), since the establishment of SELA in October 1975, considerable cooperation has taken place between United Nations organizations, agencies and programmes, especially ECLAC and SELA.

4. Such cooperation has intensified over the years and has become more diversified in terms of both the areas of cooperation and the organizations concerned.

5. Cooperation between ECLAC and SELA has consisted, inter alia, of the implementation of joint activities, the participation of representatives of ECLAC and SELA in meetings of the two institutions and the preparation by ECLAC of specialized documents in various subject areas in support of SELA activities. Some examples of this cooperation are listed below.

6. ECLAC and SELA executed a joint project aimed at launching national focal points for technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) on the Internet. As part of this project, ECLAC organized four training workshops for the creation and management of web sites, which were held, respectively, from 9 to 10 September 1999 in Caracas, Venezuela; from 14 to 15 September 1999 in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago; from 16 to 17 September 1999 in Santiago, Chile, and from 5 to 6 November 1999 in Mexico City, Mexico. The final report on the project was presented at the Fourteenth Meeting of Directors of International Technical Cooperation, held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, from 1 to 3 December 1999.

7. On 13 March 2001, representatives of SELA, ECLAC and the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA) held a meeting at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, Chile, to evaluate the results of the joint initiative for convening meetings of trade policy officials of Latin America and the Caribbean. They agreed to continue to hold these meetings, which are an opportunity for government officials to consider and direct policies in accordance with emerging international trends and with national policies for the promotion of economic and social development. Thus, it was decided that the sixth Meeting of Trade Policy Officials of Latin America and the Caribbean would be held in 2002.

8. Staff of the ECLAC Division of Production, Productivity and Management participated in the Regional Forum on Industrial Policy organized by SELA in Buenos Aires on 31 May 2001, where SELA members discussed productive

restructuring in Latin America following structural reform, and considered public policy options for improving competitiveness.

9. The ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico continued to cooperate closely with the Permanent Secretariat of SELA in conducting the annual course on Central American integration held from 1995 to 2001 in various Central American countries under a cooperation programme financed by the Government of Mexico. This cooperation included the joint organization of courses, the participation of staff and experts from ECLAC as lecturers and the production of specialized documentation.

10. The Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) continued to coordinate its programme activities with SELA, through regular contacts with SELA officials and staff members.

11. FAO has maintained close cooperation with SELA, inter alia, through reciprocal attendance at meetings and the exchange of information, experience, documents and publications.

12. During the period 1998-2001, FAO participated in the following SELA meetings: twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth ordinary meetings of the Latin American Council; Fourteenth Meeting of Directors of International Technical Cooperation and first meeting of the Regional Technical Cooperation Mechanism for Emergencies Caused by Natural Disasters.

13. Furthermore, all SELA member States participated in 1999 and 2000 in three subregional training workshops organized by FAO on the Uruguay Round and future negotiations in agriculture. The purpose of these workshops was to contribute to a better understanding among developing countries of the implications of existing WTO agreements on agriculture, fisheries and forestry, and to discuss issues that might arise in future negotiations.

14. UNESCO has continued to cooperate with SELA in its areas of competence, especially on programmes for the development of networks of researchers and research centres and in the area of prospective studies. In this connection, UNESCO has provided technical assistance and organized intergovernmental and expert meetings in conjunction with SELA.

15. In 1998-1999, UNESCO provided technical assistance to SELA in the preparation of preliminary studies for the creation of a Regional Network on Strategic and Prospective Studies. Assistance was also provided by the World Association of Futurology. SELA participated in the meeting to launch the Regional Network, which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in September 1999, and contributed to the book compiling the relevant proceedings and conclusions. In January 2000, the two organizations held a follow-up meeting on the joint UNESCO/SELA project on prospective studies and drew up a new plan for collaboration for the biennium 2000-2001.

16. UNESCO provided technical assistance to SELA in the preparation of preliminary studies for the establishment of a Network of Research Centres in Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean.

17. Furthermore, UNESCO participated in the twenty-sixth ordinary meeting of the Latin American Council, which was held in Caracas from 16 to 18 October 2000.

18. Cooperation between SELA and UNIDO during the period under review consisted, for the most part, in the continuous exchange of information on studies and reports of meetings and workshops held in the region. Special mention should be made of the close collaboration they maintained under the UNIDO-International Centre for Science and High Technology Regional Initiative on Prospective Technological Studies in Latin America and the Caribbean. SELA participated in the meeting to launch the initiative in Trieste, Italy, in December 1999, and in its implementation in some countries in the region.

19. The World Bank has continued to collaborate with SELA in many areas. In particular, officials from the Bank attended meetings organized by SELA and vice versa. In 1999 and 2001, the Bank invited SELA to participate in its Latin American and Caribbean Regional Conferences on Decentralization and Economic Security. The World Bank participated in the seminar entitled "Agriculture and the New Trade Issues in WTO: interests, options and strategies for Latin America and the Caribbean", organized by SELA and attended also by representatives of the Inter-American Development Bank, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, FAO and WTO.

20. SELA is organizing the Sixteenth Meeting of Directors of International Technical Cooperation of its member countries, scheduled to be held in Montevideo, Uruguay, from 8 to 9 November 2001 with the participation of representatives of regional, bilateral, multilateral and international development agencies.